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COR-1347-61

NRO REVIEW COMPLETED

22 SEP 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR : Chief, Special Projects Branch

SUBJECT : Weather and Intelligence Factors in the
CORONA Operations Concept.

1. The possibility of postponing a CORONA Mission because of unfavorable forecast weather over the USSR has been discussed numerous times in the past. In these discussions the Weather Staff has taken the position that, until such time as the areas of interest are significantly reduced, this would not be practical. Any decision to delay a four day mission for 24 hours would be made on the basis of forecast weather for day five being better than that for day one; and five-day weather forecasts of the accuracy required for such a decision are not available. Since an area the size of the USSR is not likely to experience unfavorable weather all at one time, a decision to delay a mission would rarely be made simply on the basis of the weather being so bad on day one that it would almost certainly be better on day five.

2. When highest priority targets are reduced to a few limited areas, the probability of obtaining photographic coverage of those areas can be increased greatly by launching the mission only when a favorable short range weather forecast for those areas is received. The launch decision could be made as much as twenty-four hours ahead of a scheduled launch; however, from the standpoint of weather forecast accuracy the decision should be made as late as possible.

3. Comments made during the briefings for Mission 9024 lead me to believe that it may now be possible to identify a limited number of targets with a priority high enough to warrant operational decisions being made primarily on the probability of obtaining coverage of those targets. After considering the weather forecast for the first and second day of the planned mission, a decision to launch on schedule or delay 24 hours would be made on the basis of forecast conditions over the highest priority targets. After the vehicle is placed in orbit camera on-off decisions would still be made pass-by-pass based upon the last minute weather forecasts and intelligence requirements.

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4. Other operational factors at the launch site may rule out this whole idea. However, I strongly recommend that the possibility of operating under the concept outlined in paragraph 3 now be seriously considered.



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Chief, Weather Staff/DPD

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